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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 17, 1982

FOR: MRS. REAGAN
FROM: SHEILA TATE
SUBJECT: Q&A for American Education Magazine

American Education magazine, a publication of the Department of Education, has submitted questions for you to answer on the subject of drug abuse. Attached are suggested answers for your approval.

cc:
Jim Rosebush

American Education Magazine
Q&A/Mrs. Reagan

1. Since last February, you have been traveling to drug rehabilitation centers and prevention programs to campaign against drug abuse among teenagers. Just how widespread is the problem and do you plan to continue your visits this coming year?

Drug abuse among teenagers is extremely widespread and it crosses all lines -- social, economic, ~~and~~ racial, ^{political} ~~into~~ the worst demographic & problems we have.

An estimated four million young people between the ages of 12 and 17 use marijuana at least once a month. An estimated 8.6 million young people consume alcohol monthly. And the latest report from the Surgeon General indicates that persons between 15 and 24 have a higher death rate than 20 years ago, with drug and alcohol use resulting in accidental death and suicides.

I intend to continue to do everything I can to draw attention to problems created by drugs and alcohol. I want to work more closely with parents and with the young people themselves. The most important message I want to get across -- and the one I think is the key to the whole problem -- is prevention.

2. Why do you think so many teenagers are getting involved with drugs?

As I have listened to young people recovering from alcohol and drug addiction, I have found them to be very vocal about

the causes. It seems to be a combination of peer pressure and low self-esteem. And sometimes unhappiness at home is part of the problem -- the weakening of the family unit, parents who are occupied with their own lives and not really tuned in to their children's needs. *Who are not knowledgeable (sp?) about drugs to know they have a problem.*

A lot of kids will tell you, if you ask them how they were turned on, that they were turned on by teachers, by babysitters, by older brothers or by sisters -- sometimes even by their parents. But this drug epidemic strikes happy homes, too, where the parents have really tried to do what's best.

3. First Ladies have a unique opportunity to be able to focus public attention on an issue and accomplish something. For Lady Bird Johnson, it was the Beautify America program. And for Mrs. Kennedy, it was the arts and the preservation of our heritage. Your concern about youth drug abuse is well known, but what do you hope to accomplish?

I would like to draw as much attention as I can to this life-wasting problem and swell the ranks of involved parents.

I also want to help make young people aware of the dangers of drugs. I'd like to see parent groups and quality drug information available in communities -- churches, schools, libraries -- throughout the U.S. because prevention is the key to stopping drugs before they have a chance to victimize our children. I am convinced prevention is the most effective way to save our next generation. *This is a world wide*

problem that affects every facet of our lives - business, the arts, sports - and it must be faced up to and stopped.

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4. Have you been able to determine any common denominator in what makes a prevention project successful in fighting drug abuse?

In my opinion, not just one common denominator makes a prevention project successful. Instead, it is a combination of parental involvement, kids helping kids and early education. I have been impressed with the programs I have visited. They are staffed with dedicated and knowledgeable people who understand the drug problem and are committed to eradicating it.

5. Many of our readers are educators in elementary and secondary schools. Do you have any advice for them on where to go for help in alerting parents to drug abuse and enlisting support to correct the problem?

Teachers ^{themselves} have to be aware of ^{have some knowledge of} the signs of drug use. They should watch to see whether their students are acting strangely in the classroom. And they have to be willing to intervene, to inform the principal of the school, to call in the parents and the child, sit down and talk and cooperate with the parents to make sure the child gets help.

And if there isn't a parent peer group in the school, they should form one. Anti-drug parent groups can be very helpful. And they are very active in the schools. There should be quality drug information available in the communities.

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Q&A/Mrs. Reagan
Page 4

And, in some schools there are groups of students who make a point of not using drugs -- a kind of positive peer pressure group -- which can be very supportive and really have an impact. Kids can do a lot to make it known among their friends that drugs are dumb. It is absolutely necessary that kids -- as well as adults -- become involved to provide a different kind of pressure to keep kids away from drugs. The desire to be part of the "in crowd" is strong. So kids must learn how to say "no."

6. Mrs. Reagan, you have spoken about how important parental involvement is to drug prevention. What can concerned parents do to ensure a drug-free environment in the schools and at home? Where does a parent confronted with the problem of youth drug abuse turn for help?

Parents can take a very positive role -- and get involved in their kids' lives. *They want to become much more involved than they have been in the past.* They can be there to offer some strong guidance to their children, monitor what they do and who they see. *It's important to try to keep the lines of communication open before drugs close them completely.* We just need to be nosy parents -- because we love our children.

Concerned parents can talk to the local PTA, the local school board, or a local parent group for help. And if there isn't a parent group, they can form one.

Parent groups try to help in every way they can. Members of parent groups exchange information constantly and give each other support.

for his time

If Johnny comes home from school and says, "Jim is giving a party next Saturday night," that parent will call Jim's parents and ask: "Is Jim giving a party? Who's going to be there? Who is going to chaperone?"

7. We can see that you have faith in America's youth. Have they simply been misled about the dangers of drug abuse during a decade in which glamorization of drugs constantly minimized the dangers of drug abuse? And can there be such a thing as the safe use of drugs?

Television is one of the greatest influences of the day -- especially on young viewers. All it takes is for a hero to take a drink or smoke marijuana, and then it's the "in" thing to do for a comedian to make a joke about drugs.

I'd like to see more films show not only the dangers of drug abuse, but also present a more positive, upbeat picture of our times.

All drugs are bad. Too many kids have the idea that there are hard drugs and soft drugs, dangerous drugs and safe drugs. There is no such thing as a safe drug. ~~Kids~~ They get lulled into thinking that, but it isn't so. That report years ago that said marijuana was harmless did more harm than anything else. Kids refer to that first report and ignore all the other reports that have come out since then proving that marijuana is harmful.

American Education Magazine
Q&A/Mrs. Reagan
Page 6

8. What should teachers do to counteract the use of drugs in the classroom and those who talk about the pleasures and harmlessness of "recreational" drugs?

Teachers should be among the first to notice drug abuse because drugs dull their students' memories. Teachers are also in an excellent position to do something about it.

They have an excellent opportunity to influence their students against drugs. ^{by talking with some knowledge about the} ~~Teachers can make it clear that a drug is~~
~~dangerous to their minds & bodies.~~
~~something that sick people need to make them well -- and a~~
~~drug is something that makes well people sick. ^{Drugs are} ~~is~~ a crutch~~
and you can't go through life depending on a crutch.

A teacher's main job is teaching. And drugs retard the learning process. Teachers have a clear line of responsibility. They should alert parents and they should alert the principal. In the classroom, there is no room for drugs.

There is no such thing as a recreational drug. Children who try drugs are exposed to the whole drug culture where the pressure will be great to try stronger and stronger drugs.

9. Based on your experience, how do you think the general public -- especially parents -- react to those who want drug abuse laws liberalized?

I think the mood of the country has moved away from the permissive acceptance of drugs. Parents react very strongly

a parent group in every community of our country. However the interesting thing is that when I visit drug rehabilitation centers I always ask "how do you feel about the legalization of *
10. Finally, what advice would you give a young person tempted

DON'T!

DON'T!
You have one life and you want to face that
~~I'd give the same reasons I told my children when they were~~
life with a clear head and wind so you can enjoy
the pleasures of it and face the challenges of it.

You need a healthy, strong body and mind -- and drugs prevent you from having them. Drugs do not solve problems. Drugs cause problems. Ignore the pressure from your friends. Drugs are not a way of escaping life's problems. They are the way to destroy your life, and the lives of those who love you.

I've seen so many heart-breaking instances where young people have become slaves to drugs. It hurts their parents. It hurts their family, and it hurts them. Sometimes it even kills them.

Please don't waste your life on drugs!

Please don't waste your life on drugs!

So overwhelming - but it certainly is a very
encouraging sign.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Am

Dodie
with a few
exceptions
it's fine
- out

Your review of
these answers (for accuracy)
for American

Education Magazines
would be appreciated.

Sheila would like to get
these up to WR by tomorrow.

Dodie

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the causes. It seems to be a combination of peer pressure and low self-esteem. And sometimes unhappiness at home is part of the problem -- the weakening of the family unit, parents who are occupied with their own lives and not really tuned in to their children's needs.

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I also want to help make young people aware of the dangers of drugs. I'd like to see parent groups ^{and quality drug} ~~and quality drug~~ ^{information available in communities -- churches, schools, libraries} ~~education classes in every school -- starting at the~~ ^{throughout} ~~elementary school level~~ ^{to} ~~-- in the U.S.~~ because prevention is the key ~~to~~ stopping drugs before they have a chance to victimize our children. I am convinced prevention is the most effective way to save our next generation.

Since when?

4. Have you been able to determine any common denominator in what makes a ~~treatment or~~ prevention project successful in fighting drug abuse?

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And, in some schools there are groups of students who make a point of not using drugs -- a kind of positive peer pressure group -- which can be very supportive and really have an impact. Kids can do a lot to make it known among their friends that drugs are dumb. It is absolutely necessary that kids -- as well as adults -- become involved to provide a different kind of pressure to keep kids away from drugs. The desire to be part of the "in crowd" is strong. So kids must learn how to say "no."

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A teacher's main job is teaching. And drugs retard the learning process. Teachers have a clear line of responsibility. They should alert parents and they should alert the principal. In the classroom, there is no room for drugs.

There is no such thing as a recreational drug. Children who try drugs are exposed to the whole drug culture where the pressure will be great to try stronger and stronger drugs.

9. Based on your experience, how do you think the general public -- especially parents -- react to those who want drug abuse laws liberalized?

I think the mood of the country has moved away from the permissive acceptance of drugs. Parents react very strongly

against liberalizing drug abuse laws and parents wield a great deal of influence -- not only in government but also through their community organizations. This is why parents have gotten involved to close down head shops in their communities. Over the past 18 months, the number of parent groups has grown from 1,000 to more than 3,000. And I'd like to see the number keep right on growing until there is a parent group in every community of our country.

10. Finally, what advice would you give a young person tempted to experiment with drugs or alcohol?

DON'T !

I'd give the same reasons I told my children when they were ten.

You need a healthy, strong body and mind -- and drugs prevent you from having them. Drugs do not solve problems. Drugs cause problems. Ignore the pressure from your friends. Drugs are not a way of escaping life's problems. They are the way to destroy your life, and the lives of those who love you.

I've seen so many heart-breaking instances where young people have become slaves to drugs. It hurts their parents. It hurts their family, and it hurts them. Sometimes it even kills them.

Please don't waste your life on drugs!

QUESTIONS FOR MRS. REAGAN'S INTERVIEW
AMERICAN EDUCATION MAGAZINE

- 1) For the past several months, the White House has been working on developing the recently-announced Federal strategy for the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse. What will your role in this effort be?
- 2) First Ladies are often known for the issues which motivate them. Lady Bird Johnson had the Beautify America program, and Mrs. Kennedy was interested in the arts and preservation of our heritage. Do you wish to be known for your effort to save a large part of an entire generation from drug abuse?
- 3) Your work with volunteer organizations such as Foster Grandparents is well-known, but have you been involved extensively with drug abuse prevention programs -- ~~for example, in California?~~
- 4) Recently, you visited the San Antonio School District in Arkansas, one of the 4,500 schools involved in a Department of Education program to prevent drug abuse through a "school-team" approach. Widely used in many states, this method has been adopted in the Federal strategy for drug prevention. Did you find the results worthwhile?

- 5) Your visit to the Arkansas project is only one of many firsthand views of the work of drug prevention efforts in the past eighteen months. From those you are familiar with, which seem to be the most effective?
- 6) Have you been able to determine any common denominator in what makes a project successful in fighting drug abuse?
- 7) Many of our readers are educators in elementary and secondary schools. Do you have any advice for them on where to go for help in alerting parents to drug abuse and enlisting support to correct the problem?
- 8) The White House drug prevention strategy seeks parental involvement -- too often a missing element in past programs -- in prevention. What can concerned parents do to ensure a drug-free environment in the schools and at home? Where does a parent confronted with the problem of youth drug abuse turn for help?
- 9) Do you plan to continue to visit successful programs in order to encourage public awareness of effective prevention efforts?

- 10) Prevention, counseling, parental involvement -- and, of course, State and Federal efforts to prevent drug smuggling and prosecute pushers and suppliers -- are good, but isn't part of the problem the susceptibility of today's youth to the temptation of drugs?

(SEE QUESTION ELEVEN)

- 11) We can see that you have faith in America's youth. Have they simply been misled about the dangers of drug abuse during a decade in which many adult-dominated organizations constantly minimized the dangers of drug abuse?
- 12) Can there be such a thing as the safe use of drugs?
- 13) If this is the case, what should teachers do to counteract those who preach the pleasures and harmlessness of "recreational" drugs instead of concentrating on the personal and social cost of abuse?
- 14) Based on your experience, how do you think the general public -- especially parents -- react to those who want drug abuse laws liberalized? (Possible mention of Proposition 19 in California, 1972, when the President was Governor)
- 15) Finally, what advice would you give a young person tempted to experiment with drugs or alcohol?

Thank you.